

# IRISH FORESTRY

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## AN INTERNATIONAL VIEW ON FORESTRY

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I NEED not say how glad I am to be back. Anyone who ever visits Ireland, has opportunity to make friends with its delightful people, partakes of their boundless, if sometimes overwhelming, hospitality, and feasts his eyes on the charm of its countryside, always has a longing to return.

I am particularly happy to be here under my present informal circumstances, but I have the assurance of the authorities that I am welcome to speak to you in an unofficial capacity. So far as FAO is concerned, I am not on an official mission. I speak for myself only and can give you informally my own impressions and observations following nearly five years of service with an international organisation.

I feel, however, I should start by telling you something about the organisation for which I work. FAO was the first international organisation. It is dedicated to improving the standards of living of the world as the only sure road to enduring peace. Food is the primordial need of man. The complement of food is shelter, and throughout the ages, forests have provided the raw materials by which man houses himself and his family.

FAO is the international agency responsible for forestry matters and the Forestry Division is FAO's tool to implement that responsibility. Therefore the task of the Forestry Division is to assist governments in supplying the peoples of the world with what they need in wood and wood products in their progress to a higher standard of living. Aside from soil conservation and other indirect functions this is the target. The art and science of forestry, the opening up of new areas, reforestation, technological and engineering improvements in processing, are all but a means to one end.

To meet this target, the Forestry Division must know two things :

1. Actual present and potential future needs for forest products;
2. The possibilities of the world's forests for meeting these needs.

Need I dwell on the complexities in seeking answers to these questions. From time to time, government forestry and statistical officers become irked at the apparently insatiable demand from FAO for information to be assembled in complicated questionnaires. If there are any such here, I ask your patience, your understanding and your co-operation.

From data already gathered, it appears that even to-day world needs exceed supplies available from forests actually under exploitation. The Forestry Division looks for improvement in four general directions :

- (i) Better forest management to increase yields;
- (ii) Putting virgin forest areas into production;
- (iii) Increased reforestation;
- (iv) Better utilisation and reduction of waste, both in harvesting and processing.

Action in these four directions is needed, even to meet present world needs. How much more it is needed to give the enormous populations now using incredibly small quantities of wood per capita supplies they must have to improve their lives.

FAO's facilities for meeting its responsibilities in the forestry field have been greatly enlarged under the Expanded Technical Assistance Programme. ETAP is becoming more and more the "action-arm" of the Forestry Division. Under it the whole world may be searched to find the most competent expert to study conditions in a country and give appropriate advice to governments. Assistance can be given in the establishment and operation of forestry schools and research institutes, special equipment not available in a country can be provided for pilot plant operations, and, most useful of all, selected national personnel can be sent abroad for training or refresher courses or for study tours in their specialised fields. Regional projects fill a separate need. For instance, in 1951 there was a very successful Forest Fire Fighting Study Tour in the United States in which 26 delegates from 17 countries participated. A Timber Grading School has just finished in Malaya. A Far Eastern Mechanical Logging Training Centre is being organised in the Philippines, and a study tour of the genus, Eucalyptus will be held in Australia next fall.

I thought it might be interesting for me to explain something of how Technical Assistance works. It is directed primarily to improving conditions in the so-called "under-developed" countries. I say "so-called" advisedly because the term "Under-developed" is a very elastic term. In effect it means practically any country that finds any part of its economy less advanced than elsewhere and is willing to request aid from an international organisation under the Technical Assistance Programme. In Europe for instance, Finland, Austria, Western Germany, Portugal and Yugoslavia have called on FAO for technical assistance in one form or another.

Regulations governing Technical Assistance are established by a Technical Assistance Board, better known as "TAB." This consists formally of the Secretary-General of United Nations as Chairman and the Directors-General of the specialised agencies as members. In practice these officers are usually represented by their nominees. Funds are contributed by countries and allocated by TAB on the basis of individually approved projects within an overall quota for each participating agency or for certain purposes from a reserve fund.

The purposes for which Technical Assistance funds can be used are being broadened as experience demonstrates actual needs. It is interesting to note the last pronouncement of the General Assembly of the United Nations requesting TAB

"2. (a) To study the practicability of meeting the needs for supplies and equipment designed to increase the effectiveness of certain economic and social services in the under-developed countries, especially in respect of the establishment of training and research centres;

(b) To place great emphasis on the establishment of training and demonstration projects in the under-developed countries and on the provision of pilot plants and similar facilities. . . ."

I call attention to these things to show that opportunities might exist for Ireland, should your Government be willing, to apply for technical assistance on the basis that this ancient civilisation is still "under-developed" in the Technical Assistance sense, so far as forestry is concerned.

Technical Assistance requests are initiated on the request of a country. A review of the situation in the forestry field was published in the last (July-September 1951) issue of UNASYLVA, and I will not take the time to detail it here. In brief, requests are of three main kinds—general missions to study potentialities of forestry development, individual experts to make general recommendations on forest policy, and specialists to give advice on specific problems.

Reports and recommendations from all three kinds of missions are beginning to flow in quantity into Headquarters at Rome. These are documents of the highest importance because their nature will influence the form and manner of forestry development in many parts of the world. The procedure adopted in the handling of experts' reports is as follows: The basic premise is that the expert is an FAO Officer. He does not report to the Government direct but to his Headquarters: It is true that he is required to discuss a first draft of his report informally with the Government authorities of his country of assignment. This is in order to be sure that any recommendations made are in principle acceptable. However, on the termination of his field work, the expert is called back to Rome for the establishment of an official report, which is done in consultation with the appropriate technical officers of the Forestry

Division. The final report is formally transmitted as an FAO report either by the Chief of FAO's Expanded Technical Assistance Programme or by the Director-General.

There are three important features inherent in this procedure for handling experts' reports. The first is that the recommendations become official FAO recommendations and must therefore be thoroughly discussed, checked and screened before approval. The second is that proposals for capital investments requiring external financing can be presented by a country to the International Bank or to another agency with the implicit approval of FAO as being based on a realistic appraisal of development possibilities. Lastly, these reports may be expected to become basic forestry documents in the history of the establishment or expansion of forest policy and programmes in a country.

Differences of opinion have arisen and will continue to arise between FAO Headquarters and the expert with respect to recommendations to be made.

The Division is meticulously careful in recruiting the best available talent. The expert is always an outstanding man in his own field. He has had an opportunity of investigating conditions on the ground. It is only therefore in cases of departure from basic principles of FAO forestry policy or insufficient attention to the known social, economic or cultural limitations of a country that the Division would have to deny approval. Fortunately, no such action has been necessary to date. It has always been possible to reach amicable agreement with experts for any suggested revisions of recommendations. The processing of the final report is usually a matter of changed format, variation of emphasis and editing. Should, however, the situation arise where differences of opinion could not be resolved, the procedure envisaged is to send the expert's recommendations, together with FAO's comments on them.

With this explanation, which I thought would be of interest to a professional society, let us proceed to an examination of some of the problems which our experts must face in their assignments. Perhaps some comparisons useful to Irish forestry may be possible. The first and most important flows from the nature of forestry itself. Forestry is a longterm proposition and continuity of policy is an unconditional essential. This is very difficult, even impossible of attainment excepting under conditions of political stability and good government. By this I do not imply any particular form of government. I do mean competence of administration and adherence to an established line of action, including regular provision of at least a minimum annual budget. This is where, in many countries, our experts run into their first and greatest troubles.

Let us take for example a suppositious country which I will invent, which has all the difficulties which our experts run into in greater or lesser degree. Let us call it Darien. On arrival in Darien it has been all too quickly borne in on our experts that not only is there no knowledge of forestry administration, but there is little conception of the

ordinary principles of government. There is no co-ordination between ministries. To be political head of a government department is a necessary stepping-stone to power—to the presidency. Persons are appointed as departmental officers on the basis of their political strength and their primary job is to advance the influence of their minister. Every time a government changes, there is a clean sweep in the department. It is not to the interest of the current president to allocate large budgets to his ministries. To get the work of government done, it is necessary to set up a commission or to give executive authority to the national bank for operations in fields of activities of departments of government. Human nature being what it is (only moreso in some under-developed countries), friction develops and advances can be at best hesitant and uncertain.

Correlated with this kind of government setup, there is a deep unrest in the population. I do not refer to the conflict of political ideologies, but a stirring against the injustices of existence. There are two classes in the population only: the rich (the "intelligentsia") and the poverty stricken peasants, illiterate, disease-ridden, eking out a bare existence by subsistence agriculture, often in the form of shifting cultivation or grazing livestock on annually burned over forest ranges. These people of course produce no surplus for the economic betterment of themselves or their country. Their way of life is based on forest destruction and its terrible consequences in tropical or semi-tropical countries, e.g. soil erosion.

Population increases in Darien are forcing migration into higher and higher areas with accelerating denudation. Pressure of political unrest are building up which will result some day in an explosion far different from the ordinary revolutions between the In's and the Out's.

The solution to these problems in Darien must be found in the provision of alternative ways of life. The stopping of forest destruction by police action, if possible, would only hasten disaster. The problem far transcends forest policy. It means general land use planning, education and a host of other measures for the economic betterment of the peasant class which comprise by far the major part of the population.

The greatest single obstacle in Darien is the system of land tenure. Decades ago, large blocks of land were awarded to the favourites of the time and these holdings have descended from father to son. The result is that the land is in the hands of a few large owners who are more often than not absentee landlords. These holdings are the good valley lands capable of intensive agriculture. In reality they support a few head of livestock or lie idle. The great mass of the peasantry is forced into the mountains to live on lands which should be under forest or used under proper regulations for pasturage. Ownership here is merely an expression of temporary occupation under shifting cultivation. There are no proper surveys. There is no incentive to progressive agriculture or to the foundation of permanent homes. Incidentally, there is no class of the population with a modicum of education from which a strong intelligent sub-professional forestry staff could be recruited and trained.

The picture I have painted of Darien is a sad picture. It is, of course, not all true of any country but there is no one of the conditions I have given you that cannot be found in some country. The picture verges too near the truth for some countries, to be pleasant to contemplate.

There is, of course, another side of the picture. There are countries with large unexploited forests, with established forest services and with hopes and ambitions for development, which FAO can help to materialise. But here are other serious problems. Forests are inaccessible, living conditions for labour are difficult, malaria must be stamped out. The costs of opening up new regions by roads cannot be borne by the revenues derivable from forests alone. They must be based on overall plans for economic development in which agriculture and other interests must play their part. From the forestry angle, new industries must be planned which will be able to use a reasonable proportion of the forest output and not just one or two presently valuable timbers.

In this connection the proposed concerted attack on the problem of world pulp and paper shortages, particularly newsprint, may prove the incentive for the economic development of new territories. You may have heard that the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, on the request of UNESCO, passed a special resolution at its 1951 Session calling attention to the dangers inherent in this world problem. This resolution, *inter alia*, asked FAO to study present and prospective needs and supply possibilities. Invitations have been sent to governments to use Technical Assistance facilities for making initial surveys to determine potentialities for pulp and paper development in their countries. I have just come from interesting discussions in London on the role which might be played by British Colonial Territories in this field.

The experience of our forestry experts under Technical Assistance highlighted the conditions essential to the solution of forestry problems. They are not new, but they are re-emphasised. They are either a part or flow from the forestry principles approved at the Sixth Session of the Conference of FAO. The more important essential conditions I might cite are as follows :

1. Forestry must be in its proper place in overall land use. That place will be determined by many factors of which the two most important are soil and water conservation in relation to agriculture and the production of raw materials to meet the needs of industry. Highest land use in the national interest may conflict sharply with short-term profitability from the local standpoint. The determination of land use must take into account the traditional ways of life of indigenous populations. Satisfactory alternatives must be established where fundamental changes are required.

2. Forest policy must be based on enlightened public approval above and apart from political considerations. This means a broad dis-

semination of knowledge of the functions and values of forests in a national economy.

3. There must be known and agreed targets for forestry development based on a realistic appraisal of social and economic benefits as compared with others forms of land use. Where natural forests are lacking, reforestation programmes are necessary.

4. The longterm element in forestry demands either that a considerable proportion of a nation's forests shall be publicly-owned, or that private forest lands should be under constant regulation with taxation and succession duty policies designed to make permanent management for maximum continuous production economically realisable.

5. Continuity of financial support to forestry is essential, or disastrous setbacks will ensue.

6. Forestry is a business (big business) as well as a science and an art. Proper administration of a national forest estate requires a stable, effective, adequately staffed organ of government, applying modern techniques and possessed of necessary research facilities.

7. Provision must be made for forestry education, both at the professional and subprofessional level.

8. Forests need industries for the use of the forest crop. There must be co-ordination between the development of forest industries and the output of a nation's forests. Forest management plans should be orientated best to meet the raw material needs of industries. On the other hand, the nature and size of forest industries, unless operating on imported wood, must be determined in the long run by the kinds of products derivable from the forests.

9. In many countries the importance of indirect forest functions—soil conservation, erosion control, maintenance of stream flow or water tables, far outweighs industrial values. The net cost of maintaining such forests should be a charge against the public revenues of a country.

10. Non-forest tree culture—the use of fast growing species such as poplars and eucalyptus—offers opportunity for economic improvement, the extent of which is still far too little realised.

11. The forest policy of a nation should be embodied in forest legislation which should set the targets and establish the ways and means of meeting them.

Many under-developed countries have a long, long way to go before these conditions essential to sound forestry can be met. Technical Assistance can point the way and perhaps give an initial push. The peoples themselves and their governments must work out their forestry destinies in accordance with their capabilities and vision. We know that much of the seed we are trying to plant will fall on stony ground. Some, however, will take root and grow. The more backward the country, the greater its need.

I am sure you have all been mentally applying the conditions I have quoted to the Irish situation. I do not propose to discuss that problem here. I only say that you have two most important pre-conditions to success, namely, a hard-working population, possessed of a high native intelligence, and soil and climatic conditions in large parts of Ireland unusually favourable for tree-growing.

May I now turn for a moment to the Report of the FAO Forestry Mission to Ireland. Two criticisms have come to my notice. Our good friend, Dr. Mark Anderson, has commented on the hardihood of an international organisation in attempting to assess Ireland's problems in a two weeks' period. No one knows better than I do the deficiencies and omissions of that report. I can only say that the term of the mission was set by the Government and the Forestry Advisor was fortunate in having the advice and assistance of many Irish officials. The Report is, I hope, the sum of their knowledge and counsel and not just a stranger's opinions.

More important, perhaps, because it will be more widely read, is an article appearing on Page 90 of the January 1, 1952 supplement to the "Irish Times" (1951 Irish Review and Annual). This article wonders where the money is coming from. The fact is of course that the Irish Reafforestation Programme was a policy of the Government of the day. The request to FAO was to review that programme. The decision to find the wherewithal had already been taken. In my humble view, it was in principle a wise decision.

One other point in this article needs clarification. The Mission Report does not recommend, as indicated in the article, that "forestry areas should not be less than 3,000 acres, following a fairly straight boundary." Straight boundaries, "yes," but the Report actually speaks of "aggregations of not less than 3,000 acres each." These aggregations would, of course, be made up of a number of parcels in a vicinity. The fact that it would be extremely difficult, even impossible, to acquire continuous areas of that size without doing damage to other proper forms of land use, was clearly understood. This is an important point which merits correction.

Aside from these misunderstandings, it is good to see some attention paid to the Irish forestry situation. It is a rather sad commentary on public appreciation to note that forestry is relegated to the closing pages of an annual Irish review. There is here your part of a world-wide challenge to forestry.

In the world to-day foresters have a part to play in raising standards of living that is not exceeded in importance by that devolving on any other class in the society of man. On their shoulders in the longterm rests to no small degree provision of conditions essential to enduring world peace. You in Ireland have it in your power to lay new foundations for a progressively increasing economic prosperity for this historic land which has a special place in the heart of every civilised man. May you and those who follow you in the Society of Irish Foresters be worthy of your opportunity and of your destiny.